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What are the Health and Nutritional Benefits of Pomegranate?

Pomegranates are low in calories and fat but high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Benefits include antioxidants, heart health, urinary health, exercise endurance, and more.

Pomegranates are round, red fruits. They feature a white inner flesh that's packed with crunchy, juicy edible seeds called arils.

They may be best known for the vibrantly colored juice they're often used in, but these unique fruits have a lot more to offer.

This article examines the many health benefits of pomegranates.

Kristin Duvall/Stocksy United

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1. Packed with nutrients

Overall, pomegranates are low in calories and fat but high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

Below is the nutrition for the arils in one average pomegranate:

- **Calories:** 234
- **Protein:** 4.7 grams (g)
- **Fat:** 3.3 g
- **Carbohydrates:** 52 g
- **Fiber:** 11.3 g
- **Vitamin C:** 32% of the Daily Value (DV)
- **Folate:** 27% of the DV
- **Magnesium:** 8% of the DV
- **Phosphorus:** 8% of the DV
- **Potassium:** 13% of the DV

Keep in mind that the nutritional information for pomegranate and arils differs from that of pomegranate juice, which won't provide much fiber or vitamin C.

SUMMARY

Pomegranates in their whole fruit form are low in calories and fat and high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

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2. Rich in antioxidants

Antioxidants are compounds that help protect the cells of your body from damage caused by free radicals. High amounts of free radicals can be harmful and contribute to a number of chronic diseases.

Pomegranates are rich in antioxidants and polyphenolic compounds, including punicalagins, anthocyanins, and hydrolyzable tannins.

Getting antioxidants from fruits such as pomegranates is a great way to support overall health and prevent disease.

SUMMARY

Pomegranates are rich in an array of antioxidants that help protect your cells from free radical damage.

3. May help keep inflammation at bay

Chronic inflammation can contribute to many conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer.

Eating pomegranates may help prevent the inflammation associated with these chronic conditions.

This is largely attributed to compounds called punicalagins, which have been shown to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

While more research is needed, research shows that consuming pomegranate juice can reduce certain markers of inflammation.

SUMMARY

Although more research is needed, pomegranates contain compounds that may help prevent chronic inflammation associated with disease.

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4. May have anticancer properties

Research has found that compounds in pomegranate have anti-cancer properties.

Animal research has also found that pomegranate helps slow tumor growth in the early stages of liver cancer.

Plus, according to older research, pomegranate extract may be beneficial for prostate cancer.

SUMMARY

Pomegranate has been observed to have anticancer effects. It may slow tumor growth and spread and reduce inflammation, although more research is needed to learn more.

5. May offer heart health benefits

There is evidence that fruits rich in polyphenolic compounds, such as pomegranate, may benefit heart health.

For example, in a study on people with heart disease, drinking pomegranate juice reduced the frequency and severity of chest pain, as well as certain biomarkers that suggest a protective effect on heart health.

SUMMARY

Compounds in pomegranate may reduce blood pressure, decrease plaque buildup, and reduce chest pain.

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6. Support urinary health

Test-tube and human studies have found that pomegranate extract may help reduce the formation of kidney stones.

In one 2014 study, pomegranate extract was found to inhibit the mechanism associated with stone formation in people with recurrent kidney stones.

Additionally, animal studies have found that pomegranate extract can help regulate the concentration of oxalates, calcium, and phosphates in the blood, which are common components of kidney stones.

SUMMARY

Certain compounds in pomegranate may help prevent kidney stones.

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7. May have antimicrobial properties

Pomegranate compounds may help fight harmful microorganisms.

For instance, they may protect oral health by reducing the growth of germs that can contribute to bad breath and tooth decay.

SUMMARY

Pomegranates contain compounds that help fight off potentially harmful bacteria, fungi, and yeasts — particularly germs in the mouth that can cause bad breath and tooth decay.

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8. May improve exercise endurance

The polyphenols in pomegranates may increase exercise endurance.

One small study found that pomegranate extract increased time to exhaustion and improved performance in trained cyclists.

Other research has found that pomegranate supplements may improve both endurance and muscle recovery.

However, research using pomegranate juice has found no benefit for muscle recovery after exercise, indicating that more studies are needed.

SUMMARY

Pomegranates contain compounds that may improve endurance and recovery.

9. Good for your brain

Pomegranates contain antioxidants called ellagitannins, which help reduce inflammation in the body.

Some studies have found that ellagitannins may help protect the brain against Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease by reducing oxidative damage and increasing the survival of brain cells.

Ellagitannins are believed to produce a compound in the gut called urolithin A, which has been studied for its ability to reduce inflammation in the brain and delay the onset of cognitive diseases.

Nonetheless, more research is needed.

SUMMARY

Compounds in pomegranate may help protect brain health and prevent Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease.

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10. Supports digestive health

Eating pomegranate may help support the health of your gut microbiome, which plays a key role in many aspects of health.

Test-tube research has found that pomegranate can increase levels of beneficial gut bacteria, suggesting that it may have prebiotic effects.

Prebiotics serve as fuel for the beneficial bacteria in your gut and support a healthier gut microbiome.

Additionally, pomegranate arils are rich in fiber, which is essential for digestive health and may protect against some digestive conditions.

SUMMARY

Pomegranate arils are also rich in fiber, which serves as fuel for probiotics and helps prevent certain digestive conditions.

Frequently asked questions

What happens if you eat pomegranates daily?

Research suggests drinking pomegranate juice every day for 2 months may lower systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, or both in some people.

A placebo-controlled 2022 study indicated that daily supplementation with oral pomegranate extract may reduce the appearance of severe wrinkles, improve skin microbiome (microorganisms), and lower skin oil production, among other skin and general health benefits.

A 2023 systematic review also found that consuming pomegranates every day can improve cognitive function in healthy individuals and lower the chance of cognitive impairment. Cognitive refers to processes related to learning, remembering, and understanding information.

If you live with diabetes, you may want to ask your doctor about eating pomegranates every day since the fruit has a high sugar content.

Why is pomegranate a superfood?

In lay terms, superfoods are nutrient-dense foods that have the potential to benefit your health when you eat them regularly. Some people may consider pomegranates a superfood because of their anti-inflammatory properties and high content in fiber, vitamins, antioxidants, and minerals.

Is pomegranate good for kidney health?

Research in humans is limited when it comes to the benefits of pomegranates for kidney health. However, foods that are high in antioxidants may offer benefits for the whole body, including the kidneys. If you live with kidney disease, however, you may want to discuss eating pomegranates with your healthcare professional because of the fruit's high potassium content and potential to interact with some medications.

Is it okay to eat pomegranate seeds?

Pomegranate seeds are edible and can be a great source of many essential vitamins.

Is pomegranate the healthiest fruit in the world?

Pomegranate is highly nutritious and can be a great addition to a balanced diet. However, all fruits offer a unique set of nutrients, so be sure to enjoy pomegranates alongside a variety of other healthy fruits.

Who should not have pomegranates?

Pomegranate may interact with certain medications, including drugs used to treat high blood pressure. The fruit is also high in sugar and potassium. Therefore, consider asking your healthcare professional if you live with diabetes or kidney disease, or take any type of medication.

The bottom line

Pomegranates are rich in antioxidants, fiber, and a variety of vitamins and minerals.

Pomegranates may also help protect against cancer, support exercise endurance, and prevent harmful germs.

Although human research on some of these potential benefits is lacking, it's safe to say that pomegranate is a tasty, nutritious addition to your diet.

Just one thing

Try this today: Next time you go to the store, grab a pomegranate! To easily remove the arils, cut the fruit in half, submerge it in water, and peel out the arils using your fingers. Enjoy as a snack or sprinkle onto avocado toast, salads, yogurt, or smoothies.

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NUTRITION ✓ Evidence Based

What Is Dragon Fruit and Does It Have Health Benefits?

Medically reviewed by Jerlyn Jones, MS MPA RDN LD CLT, Nutrition — Written by Franziska Spritzler — Updated on January 16, 2024

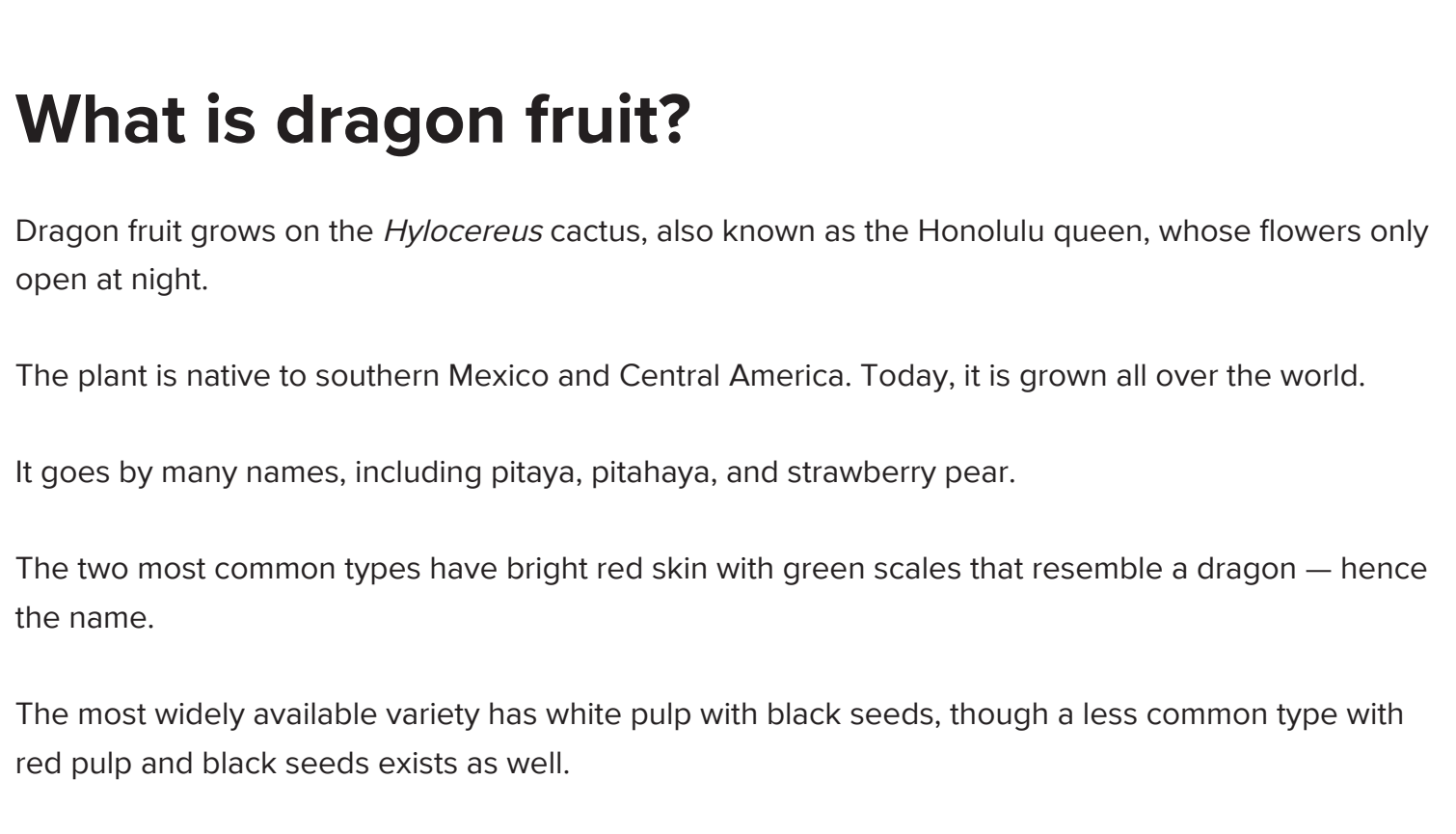
What It Is | Nutrition | Antioxidants | Benefits | Downsides | How to Eat | Bottom Line

Dragon fruit is a tropical fruit that's low in calories and high in fiber and antioxidants. Some people say it tastes like a cross between a pear and a kiwi. You can slice and eat the fruit as-is, try it with yogurt, or add it to a smoothie or salad.

Dragon fruit is a tropical fruit that has become increasingly popular in recent years.

Though people primarily enjoy it for its unique look and taste, evidence suggests it may provide health benefits as well.

This article takes a look at dragon fruit, including its nutrition, benefits, and how to eat it.



Shava Cueva/Stocksy

What is dragon fruit?

Dragon fruit grows on the *Hylocereus* cactus, also known as the Honolulu queen, whose flowers only open at night.

The plant is native to southern Mexico and Central America. Today, it is grown all over the world.

It goes by many names, including pitaya, pitahaya, and strawberry pear.

The two most common types have bright red skin with green scales that resemble a dragon — hence the name.

The most widely available variety has white pulp with black seeds, though a less common type with red pulp and black seeds exists as well.

Another variety — referred to as yellow dragon fruit — has yellow skin and white pulp with black seeds.

Dragon fruit may look exotic, but its flavors are similar to other fruits. Its taste has been described as a slightly sweet cross between a kiwi and a pear.

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Nutrition facts

Dragon fruit contains small amounts of several nutrients. It's also a decent source of iron, magnesium, and fiber.

Here are the nutrition facts for a serving of 3.5 ounces, or 100 grams (1):

- **Calories:** 57
- **Protein:** 0.36 grams
- **Fat:** 0.14 grams
- **Carbs:** 15 grams

- **Fiber:** 3 grams
- **Vitamin C:** 5% of the DV
- **Iron:** 1% of the DV
- **Magnesium:** 2% of the DV

Provides several antioxidants

Dragon fruit contains several types of antioxidants.

These are compounds that protect your cells from unstable molecules called free radicals, which are linked to chronic diseases and aging (2).

These are some of the main antioxidants contained in dragon fruit pulp (3):

- **Betalains:** Found in the pulp of red dragon fruit, these deep red pigments have been shown to significantly reduce total cholesterol, LDL, and other health risk factor markers (4).
- **Hydroxycinnamates:** This group of compounds has demonstrated anticancer activity in test-tube and animal studies (5).
- **Flavonoids:** This large, diverse group of antioxidants is linked to better brain health and a reduced risk of heart disease (6, 7).

One study compared the antioxidant properties of 17 tropical fruits and berries.

While dragon fruit's antioxidant capacity was not especially high, it was found to be best at protecting certain fatty acids from free radical damage (8).

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Potential health benefits

Animal studies suggest that dragon fruit may provide various health benefits.

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Many of these are likely due to its fiber and antioxidant content.

Both red and white varieties of dragon fruit have been shown to reduce insulin resistance and fatty liver in obese mice (9, 10, 11).

In one study, mice on a high-fat diet who received an extract of the fruit gained less weight and had reductions in liver fat, insulin resistance, and inflammation, which were attributed in part to beneficial changes in gut bacteria (11).

Dragon fruit contains prebiotic fiber that promotes the growth of beneficial bacteria in your gut — potentially improving metabolic health (12).

Although this fruit may improve certain features of metabolic syndrome — a condition associated with type 2 diabetes — not all effects may be favorable.

In a 2014 study in mice on a high-fat, high-carb diet, the group that received dragon fruit juice had better blood sugar responses and reductions in some liver enzyme markers, while another liver enzyme marker significantly increased (13).

In another older study, rats with diabetes treated with an extract from the fruit had a 35% reduction in malondialdehyde, a marker of free-radical damage. They also had less arterial stiffness, compared to the control group (14).

Study results on the effects of dragon fruit on type 2 diabetes in people are inconsistent, and more research is needed to confirm these beneficial effects (15).

Was this article helpful?

○ Yes ○ No

Adverse effects

Overall, dragon fruit appears to be safe. However, people may develop an allergic reaction in some rare cases.

In two older case studies, women with no history of food allergies developed anaphylactic reactions after consuming a fruit mixture that contained dragon fruit. Testing confirmed that they had antibodies against dragon fruit in their blood (16, 17).

These are the only two reported allergic reactions at this point, but other people may be allergic to this fruit without knowing it.

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How to eat it

Though it may look intimidating, dragon fruit is very easy to eat.

Here's how to eat dragon fruit:

- Select a ripe fruit with bright red, evenly colored skin that gives slightly when squeezed.
- Use a sharp knife and cut straight through the fruit, slicing it in half.
- You can use a spoon to eat the fruit out of the skin or peel the skin off and slice the pulp into small pieces.

Ideas for serving dragon fruit:

- Simply slice it up and eat it as is.
- Chop it into small pieces and top with Greek yogurt and chopped nuts.
- Include it in a salad.

The bottom line

Dragon fruit is a low-calorie fruit that contains less sugar and fewer carbs than many other tropical fruits.

It may offer some health benefits, but human studies are needed to verify this.

Overall, dragon fruit is unique, incredibly tasty, and can add variety to your diet.

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HISTORY

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Our experts continually monitor the health and wellness space, and we update our articles when new information becomes available.

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